183 Thus used, taboo has organized and transformed the
784 native milieu; it has established a line of demarcation between the sacred and the profane by removing from ordinary intercourse persons, places and objects connected with the invisible and considered to be impregnated by it. However, since by its very nature it forms an incontestable and nonappealable law, it has been the favorite means of anyone in authority wishing to impose his will without fear of protest. Thus the laity has, so to speak, had to submit to a arbitrary system of law that is essentially religious. Social regulations, rules of hygiene, medical prescriptions, culinary preparations, forms of courtesy -- all these are surrounded with taboos and all have absorbed from the tne the very essence of its vitality and its constraining force.

784 Within the family, which is the generating force of any
593 collective group, the individual finds himself surrounded by taboos throughout his life. They are what establish and maintain the authority of the elders (koro-u) and especially of their head (fa). Taboos impose ancestral traditions which have developed separately and become gradually superimposition from earliest times to the present, the whole of which constitute, in fact, family custom.

784 Patriarchy, brotherhood, the state, and all Bambara
[571] collectivities operate in the same way, since all collectivities are in a sense modeled on the natural family.

Religion, family, and society as a whole, in short the whole of Bambara civilization, have been and continue to be largely dependent on the tne.

[133] 3. Mantic, Religion and Magic

787 Mantic. Among the Bambara, as among all the Sudanese, religion and magic are both based on a belief in a permanent revelation which the manes, the spirits and the gods give to men with regard to the events of their lives.

The various means by which man can come to know this revelation on the part of invisible beings are what is called divination or mantic. This is extra-rational knowledge since it makes known things which could not be learned through reason

562 Between the omnipotence of the first and the humble
581 lot of the second there is every possible gradation. This is all
the more true in that, thanks to polygamy, lawful households
595 may be found in association with the free unions and concubinage desired by the husband, in such a way that the position of each person in the family, already affected by all these contingencies, is, in the last analysis, dominated by the absolute authority of the fa. We shall see this clearly in connection with filiation, and it is no less apparent regarding wives, except for those already described who have sufficient influence and the means to live virtually independent of the rest of the family. Although in fact a wife who was not paid for has no regular position and her children legally do not belong to either of their parents, although a concubine does not even count as a person, according to custom, and her children are their genitor's slaves, merely by the will of the fa either of them may have an enviable pre-eminence in the family, especially envied by the lawful wives.

593 Under these circumstances, it may be admitted that con-
562 jugal duties, obedience, fidelity, and their counterparts, the rights to help and assistance, have nuances that vary from one situation to another. It is true that a wife must obey her husband and that he is allowed to resort to [208] corporal punishment to control her, which he does not fail to use. She is not completely at his mercy, however. For instance, he can require her to live in a given place; nevertheless, if it has been agreed that she is not to leave the tribal territory, and this usually tacitly understood, he may not take her away. He can force her to do household chores, but if she is free, he cannot require her to do servile tasks. In the same way, he cannot rent out her services, put her up as security, or sell her.

837 The duty of reciprocal fidelity is most often very vague.
Admittedly, this is not expected of the husband, and indeed, the wife often encourages his lapses from virtue on the theory that this indulgence will attach him to her. As far as a wife's misbehavior is concerned, a husband does not always give it much importance and is sometimes not at all averse to profiting
[848] from it. If children result from her indiscretions, he is not distressed in the least about accepting or denying them.

D. Position of Women

562 Women's society has remained much more impenetrable to European civilization. Women very rarely go to French schools, and unlike the men, who, during their military service and otherwise, are partly immersed in our system of civilization, they have few contacts with the Whites and appear to be even more attached to custom than their husbands. Very few speak French, and for all these [191] reasons their society has remained closed and very imperfectly known to the Whites.

562 858 Reasoning from what is known of their juridicial situation, we have deduced their inferior position. Perhaps a better knowledge of their role and of their importance in the society will lead us to very different conclusions. From the legal point of view, a woman is always a minor; she belongs first to her own community, to which she owes obedience, then to her husband's community. When the marriage is legal, that is to say, when the husband has paid the matrimonial settlement, the children belong to the husband; if not, in the case of concubinage, the woman's family can claim the child, because it belongs to the family, as does everything of the mother's.

562 582 583 Her marriage is decided on by the fa; although in practice the woman is often consulted indirectly beforehand, and she has a certain liberty in her choice. Even a slave can refuse to marry her master, despite gifts and promises. But a woman is forbidden to marry someone she considers a relative, that is, someone who belongs to her paternal line and who bears the same name she does. Exogamy is the rule.

562 593 Yet, when a woman marries, she keeps her paternal name and her personal taboos; sometimes she adds her name to that of her son, who normally bears the dyamu of his father. The woman remains very attached [75] to her family and goes to stay with them often. Among them she will find support in case of a difference of opinion [586] with her husband. In case of divorce through the fault of the husband, he loses all rights over the wife as well as the settlement he had paid.

595 [431] In the system of polygamy, the first wife is mistress of the house; the other wives gather at her place for meals. She distributes the husband's presents, but aside from these privileges, the rights of the wives are equal as are those of their children.

844 Before delivery of her child, a woman is advised to pound grain. When the labor pains come, the woman retires to her hut with several matrons (men are not allowed access). If the child is poorly presented, the priest is called. He performs outside the hut, simulating the delivery and chanting the formulas that ease labor. To deliver the infant, the woman kneels with her hands thrown behind her, while the midwife supports the small of her back. At birth the infant's shoulders must touch the ground; this is the moment when he receives his spiritual principles. The infant is washed several times and smeared with karite butter.

846 The mother must not go out during the first eight days after the
853 birth; she must devote herself entirely to the new-born. She massages
854 his head daily in order to give it a more rounded form, and she pinches his nose. She nurses the infant for the first two years, then the weaned child passes directly to the communal calabash. Until the child can walk, the mother carries it astraddle on her back with the aid of a loincloth knotted at her chest. In this manner the infant accompanies the mother everywhere, to work as well as to the dance.
868 It is during these intimate contacts that the mother teaches her child to talk. Later, the little girls stay with their mothers who teach them all the domestic arts, while the boys are educated in outside work.
[867] During their childhood they are taught the usages and rules of deport-
201 ment: a woman knows she must never shake the hand of a man to
576 greet him, and, if he extends his hand, she flings up her arm "as a sign of not being interested." A man will salute his superior by extending his hand palm upwards, and the superior will put his over it; inversely, when a man greets an inferior he extends his hand with the palm down, while for an equal his hand will be perpendicular to the ground. If a man must ask someone's pardon, he puts his hands behind his back to simulate the tail of an animal (for he has acted like an animal). Crossing the hands in front of or upon the head is a sign of sadness. To mark his submission to a king, a man puts his right elbow to the ground. To pray to God, the two hands are extended with the palms turned [89] outward. A woman learns that it is im-
576 pudent to question her husband during the day, and when she speaks
593 of him, she says koke, that is, big brother, for she cannot pronounce
833 his name or in any way recall the bonds which exist between them. It is only during the two consecutive nights that she couples with him

that she may speak to him freely. When the day of union comes, the wife herself prepares her husband's food; then she lies on the left side (the feminine side) and her husband on the right side, and she cannot be impregnated except by a union twice repeated.

These corporal techniques are dictated and ordered by the religious imperatives which pervade the life of the Bambara from before his birth until after his death.

What we have said of the Bambara's religion and of his conception of the world enables us to understand that there cannot be for him a complete break between life and death: birth is a reincarnation; death is not destruction. This is why a man's life does not present one substantial unity but is divided into a certain number of distinct periods, each of which is inaugurated by a rite of transition that marks the death of an anterior state and the rebirth to a new life.

a. Before Birth

From the first month after his conception, the infant constitutes a person who receives a series of spiritual forces emanating from his father's side of the family and especially from the recently deceased ancestor whose name he will receive. At the same time, he inherits all of the paternal taboos, which the mother must respect during her pregnancy. It is only after his birth, at the time he receives his name, that the infant receives the spiritual forces coming from his mother's side. These forces are transmitted through the medium of the priest and the ancestors of the priest.

From then on, the infant is required to observe all the taboos of the beings who have had a part in the composition of his personality; he thus finds himself tightly bound to the society in which he will live.

b. Birth Rites

At birth the baby is washed with millet beer (1) (to purify him)

1. For all these rites, see G. Dieterlen, Essai sur la religion bambara [Essay on Bambara Religion].

[i.e., sexual reproduction and childrearing; see pp. 117-119. -Ann Hyatt]

584 there without further delay and makes his request, which the man who
887 introduced him repeats word by word and sentence by sentence.

584 The father of the girl ponders a moment, and if the suit pleases him he answers in a word: "A gnéna, that's good." The little package of four kola nuts is then offered him, he summons his daughter and her mother, and the fouroubolоma tigi again explains the reason for his /201/ coming. Everything is settled with the following words: "Give my greetings to the one who sent you and all his family, tell him that I am happy he is asking for my daughter. A diara an ye hali (1), it is a great joy for us, but this, you know, needs reflection! I

1. A, "that"; diara, "is happy";
an ye, "for us"; hali, "much."

will speak to my friends soon, and in a few days you will know my decision." The emissary has not been refused and, satisfied with himself and the good prospects of the matter, he leaves to carry to the suitor the words of the girl's father, which should open the door of hope to his heart.

2. The Diviners and Fetishes Accept or Reject the Suitor

584 To marry their daughter and marry her well is a nightmare to
593 every father and mother, and both remain anxious when a suitor presents himself. The Bambara know anguish! A daughter may not be beautiful; often she is even ugly, with a large navel, an umbilical hernia, or blood blister due to the clumsiness of the midwife, but her father lives in her large, white eyes marked with a black spot that is full of life and shining, in her broadly slit mouth and puffy lips; he recognizes his own, and his whole inner being cries to him: "This is your daughter, this is your blood."

Frightful thoughts come to torment him: "If the suitor should have the character of a villain and the brutality of a beast, will he not beat my child mercilessly? Might he have one of those shameful diseases that people hide and do not name, so that my daughter will commit adultery in order to avoid the embarrassment of being

584 sterile? And if he should be one of those sensualists so numerous
593 among us, and, bored after having enjoyed her, should drive her away and reject her?" He trembles and wants to know what the future holds both for him and for her, and goes to consult the diviners.

584 Two and often three diviners are consulted. If they all agree in
593 testifying that the suitor is of good character, that divorce is not to
787 be feared, and that the child will become the mother of healthy, strong, and vigorous children who will perpetuate her people and her blood, he finds joy again. He tells the verdict to both his wife and his daughter, he imparts his decision to the head of the village and the council of elders, and /202/ without any delay, freed as he is from all fear, he notifies the suitor that the doors of his home are open to him.

584 At this announcement the suitor chooses a fat hen from his hen
787 house, takes one or two kola nuts from his store, and again the fouroubolomа tigi, the guardian of the wedding gifts, starts on his way, for this time he must find out whether the family boli, and sometimes the shades of its ancestors, are opposed to the proposed union (1).

1. If some occurrence later causes the engagement to be broken, or if there is a marriage followed by divorce, it does not enter his mind that the diviners were mistaken. The whole responsibility falls on the head of an enemy, who through hatred or jealousy has found a way to disrupt everything. It is almost always someone unknown, which is fortunate.

584 The father of the little girl takes down his goatskin, or often the
787 skin of a wild animal, a frightful, dirty foroko, the tabernacle of the
778 family boli; he sprinkles them with the blood of the hen and then spits a piece of chewed kola nut on them. If he does not have family boli -- an unusual situation -- he sacrifices to his ancestors on the doorsill of the entry hut, or b'lon, and on the kârâ, if he owns one.